



# WORLD CONFERENCE ON RECORDS AND GENEALOGICAL SEMINAR

*"Record Protection in  
an Uncertain World"*

Salt Lake City, Utah, U.S.A.

5-8 August 1969

-----

## UNESCO'S ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF ARCHIVES

By

Dr. Alfred Wagner

## UNESCO'S ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF ARCHIVES

By

Dr. Alfred Wagner

1

For a better understanding of the role of *ARCHIVES* among *UNESCO'S* activities, I should like, first, to outline the structure and the competence of the Organization as a whole.

The *UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION* - one of the Specialized Agencies, foreseen in the Charter of the United Nations - was founded in 1945/46 as an international organization for world-wide co-operative activity in its area. The range of its responsibilities covers the spectrum from Education (in the broad sense of the word) through Culture (in its narrow meaning) and Science to the field of Communication (which includes Archives). The organization of the Secretariat which has its Headquarters in Paris is based on these four Programme Sectors, each of them consisting of several Departments which are divided into Divisions. If necessary, these are subdivided once again into Sections of various sizes.

The Legislative rests with the Organization's "parliament", the General Conference of the Member States which is summoned biennially in autumn to deliberate and pass the programme of action and the budget for the following biennium, all delegations having equal votes; furthermore, it is up to the General Conference to elect the Executive Board and the Director-General.

The Executive of *UNESCO* is represented by the Executive Board and the Director-General. The Board is a committee of 30 Member States which meets at least twice annually; the Director-General, who is elected to a term of six years, acts as the Chief of the Executive.

The expenses of the Organization's programme are distributed among the Member States according to a scale established by the United Nations: two-thirds of the budget are covered by the 6 economically strongest members: *USA*, *USSR*, the Federal Republic of Germany, United Kingdom, France and Canada, while 50 of the 125 members pay a minimum contribution of 0.04%.

In 1958, the Headquarters of the Organization in Paris moved into a modern building built for the purpose; at present it has a staff of 1,500 composed of some 600 professionals, plus 900 office and technical staff. In addition, about 2,100 people work in Unesco's field offices and projects all over the world, 1,600 being professionals, and 500 in the other categories. While in 1946 Unesco with 20 Member States had about 600 employees, in 1969

the staff of the Secretariat with 125 member States numbers 3,600.

Two fundamental principles determine *UNESCO'S* work: the encouragement of intellectual co-operation among the nations and world-wide activity in the service of cultural development. Both are governed by the high moral claim that forms the 'raison d 'etre' of the United Nations (Art. I of the Constitution of *UNESCO*, 16.11.1945):

"... to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of the law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion by the Charter of the United Nations".

Let us see which funds *UNESCO* has at its disposal, and how they are distributed among its various fields of action.

For the biennium 1967/68 the regular budget of the Organization amounted to 60 million dollars. As this amount was doubled by funds from extra-budgetary sources, a total programme of 120 million dollars could be financed. The main part of these supplementary funds are derived from the United Nations Development Programme in New York; this is a fund for development aid, financed by the pledges of the more highly-developed members of the United Nations, from which allotments are granted to developing countries which may choose technical assistance projects within a broad range of programmes offered by the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies. *UNESCO'S* Sectors and other Units participated in the entire budget as follows: Education and Science 30% each; Cultural, Human and Social Sciences - 8%; Administrative and other central services - 21%; Communication - 11%, i.e. 11 million dollars. No wonder, that within this Sector the Department of Documentation, Libraries and Archives does not have the richest programme, as it is grouped with other departments such as 'International exchange of information', 'Means of mass communication' and 'Statistics' which take more important positions and are still gaining ground in our mass era. It goes without saying that Archives hold only the third place after Libraries and Documentation.

## II

In accordance with the two basic principles of *UNESCO'S* activity, the Department of Documentation, Libraries and Archives is divided into two programme divisions and an internal Library Service: The first programme division deals with research and international collaboration; in co-operation with the international professional associations - i.e. in the field of Archives with the International Council on Archives with the International Council on Archives - it has to lay the intellectual foundation on which Division II, being responsible for assistance projects, can establish its practical work in the service of development. Thus, Division I, in three Sections, organizes, finances and promotes studies, reports and manuals, as well as the exchange of experiences through colloquiums and conferences; furthermore, it

organizes an international committee of experts which advises the Director-General on problems in these fields. By this means it provides the spiritual arsenal on the basis of which Division II elaborates and executes its development projects. During 1967/68 and 1969/70, within the Archives Section of Division I, the following subjects have been and are being dealt with in studies and manuals, seminars and working parties, undertaken and organized either directly under contract with the author or with the International Council on Archives, or financed by the Council itself by means of *UNESCO'S* regular subvention: Archival training in developing countries, possibilities of a regional training centre in East Africa, mechanization of archives services, archival legislation, liberalization of access to archives, microfilming as a means of publication, function of modern archives and records management in developing countries, restoration and preservation of archival sources. For 1969/70, contracts to the value of \$5,500 have been concluded with the Council which, during this period also benefits from a *UNESCO* subvention of \$15,000, voted by the General Conference. Thus, this Division's budget for activities in the field of Archives for 1969/70 totals about \$22,000.

At the Member States' requests, and on its own initiative Division II, the Development Division, elaborates and carries out the assistance projects. As far as Archives are concerned, our objectives are to prepare and execute projects according to the following scheme:

a short term consultant and planning mission (1-3 months) of an expert whose report, with concrete recommendations, serves as a basis for the actual programme of assistance;

several fellowships for the training abroad of qualified professional staff, one of them for the designated Director of the Archives;

a long term mission (1-2 years) of an expert who is responsible for setting up and starting the Archives, at the same time introducing his local counterpart to his duties;

the establishment of training facilities in the area on the national or regional level;

special missions of restorers or reprography experts for setting up those technical services and training personnel on the spot;

a supply of the required technical equipment (in co-ordination with the other activities).

Of course, any suitable modification in the composition of such a programme is possible, and the assistance may be adjusted according to the actual needs. However, as a rule material and equipment are granted, only when appropriately combined with other aid. Moreover, a full project generally requires a considerable amount of participation from the interested country which has to finance programme items itself, such as the construction of archives buildings which would exceed the limits of a possible *UNESCO* contribution.

Within its three Sections Division II has received, under *UNESCO'S* Participation Programme, 83 requests for aid from Member States during 1969/70: 28 from Africa, 15 from

Latin America, 18 from Asia, 11 from the Arab States (which *UNESCO* considers as a developing area of its own), and 11 from Europe; 16 of the requests were related to Archives, 24 to Documentation and Special Libraries, 43 to National, Public and School Libraries. The total of all projects requested which on the average amounted to \$11,000, was \$920,000; that is seven times the amount available in the regular budget of the Participation Programme, \$122,000, from which actually only 34 of the 83 requests can be met with the following breakdown: Archives - 17% (\$20,600), Documentation Centres and Special Libraries - 36%, the other Libraries - 47%. Africa is represented with 27%, Latin America with 24%, Asia with 23%, the Arab States with 16% and Europe with 10%. On its own initiative, *UNESCO* has foreseen in this biennium a so-called Pilot Project on the development of an archives service. This project which is to be launched with an *UNESCO* contribution of \$25,000 in an African state, comprises the establishment of a modern archives and records management system that shall serve as a model to other African countries. From the four Member States which have applied for it, one has to be selected which does not yet possess an independent archives service, but offers - in its economic, social and cultural stage of development - the required favourable conditions for setting up an archives administration, for the building up of which the country itself has to contribute generously. Projected for six years, in 1969/70 it shall be started with a planning mission and a fellowship for the future Director of the Archives; in 1970 a 1-2 years mission is scheduled to begin during which an expert will implement the first stage of the project with his local counterpart. Furthermore, the programme of the Archives Section includes the activity of *UNESCO*'S Mobile Microfilm Unit; with an expert travelling from country to country, it films archival holdings which have been selected by the competent national authorities for their historical value or because of their endangered state of preservation. During 1969/70, on the basis of nine requests, the Unit will visit six states, each for four months on the average: two Asian, two Arab and two African ones. Its budget is \$43,000. Thus, the total volume of the Archives Programme for 1969/70 amounts to about \$110,000.

An important increase of the Department's meagre ordinary programme may be expected from the extraordinary funds of the United Nations Development Programme. This would serve to finance part of the numerous comprehensive long term development projects for which, in the ordinary budget, only a short term planning mission could be accommodated (follow-up and implementation of planning missions). On this basis, the Department might be able, by 1972, to establish and build up in the first stage archives administrations in several states of Africa, Asia and the Arab area, if the countries concerned would decide, following *UNESCO*'S suggestions, to give a sufficiently high priority, at the charge of their *UNDP* contingent, to the development of archives services. This would increase the Archives budget of the two programme divisions by almost three times.

Within the sphere of *UNESCO*-supported and *UNESCO* co-ordinated activites in he field of Archives, a wide-range and long term assistance programme has to be mentioned which the International Council on Archives, in close-co-operation with *UNESCO* and with financial support from American foundations, is preparing for the African Continent. Moreover,

*UNSECO* has been supporting the council's efforts to stimulate and reinforce archival action in developing areas by the creation of regional branches in which the interested countries may join for co-operation; such branches of the Council have been or are being established in South East Asia, East and Central Africa and the Arab region.

III

After all, *UNESCO'S* position, its mission as *the* international institution for the promotion of Culture on a global level on such a feeble financial ground may appear rather problematic. Are 60 million dollars per year sufficient to execute such an ambitious programme? And with regard to us: is it possible, in view of the numerous non and under-developed archives administrations throughout the world, to undertake efficient aid in setting and building up Archives with about \$60,000 annually? To both questions the answer of course is 'no'. However, such questioning is based on a wrong *UNESCO* image: it is not the Organization's role to bear the assistance programmes within its responsibility entirely or even to a large extent on its own.

On the other hand, *UNESCO* displays its most fruitful and permanent efficiency - which, of course, is not to be measured - on its own small basis *indirectly*: by looking for ideas worth being realized and recommending studies serving the development activity - by taking action, initiated or supported by others, under its aegis and integrating it in or co-ordinating it with its programme. Thus, *UNESCO* is capable - by virtue of the high prestige it enjoys all over the world - of acting efficiently as *the* great animator, stimulator and co-ordinator in its area; in doing so, it meets the requirements of its role in the moral and spiritual sphere.

This concept may consequently be applied to the branch of Archives where it produces positive results. Last, but not least, this is due to the fact that the International Council on Archives has its Headquarters in Paris and that the management of *UNESCO'S* activity in the field of Archives rests with one person who is a colleague of the profession. Taking into account the spirit of collegial unity and cordial understanding which penetrates the small international family of archivists, this favourable situation - by which even the obstacles of administrative bureaucracy can be neutralized to a large extent - is of an inestimable value for the work towards the common aim.